

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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P R 191815Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3981

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3476

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: INCIDENTS AT HONDURAS: EL SALVADOR BORDER

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2901 (DTG 141800Z JULY 76)

BEGIN SUMMARY: LOCAL PRESS CARRIED SALVADORAN REPORTS OF OUTBREAKS OF FIGHTING AT SEVERAL BORDER POINTS. INITIAL PRESS REPORTS WERE BASED ON SALVADORAN OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE OF JULY 15 INDICATING THAT THE INCIDENTS HAD BEEN INITIATED BY HONDURAS AND THAT TWO SALVADORAN SOLDIERS HAD DIED AND THREE HAD BEEN WOUNDED. ON JUNE 17, THE GOH ARMED FORCES ISSUED AN OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE STATING THAT BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED TO A CEASE FIRE. CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR TOLD AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ ON JULY 16 THAT HE BELIEVED THE SITUATION WAS BEING EFFECTIVELY RESOLVED. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESS REPORTS ON JULY 15 CARRIED THE SUBSTANCE OF THE OFFICIAL SALVADORAN COMMUNIQUE INDICATING THAT THERE HAD BEEN OUTBREAKS OF FIGHTING AT TWO POINTS ALONG THE BORDER AT ZAZALAPA AND MONTECA. THE COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT THE INCIDENTS HAD BEEN INITIATED BY HONDURAS AND THAT TWO SALVADORAN SOLDIERS HAD BEEN KILLED AND THREE WOUNDED. IT FURTHER STATED THAT THE INCIDENTS WOULD BE INVESTIGATED BY THE RESPECTIVE ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF AND SAID THAT
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THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES WERE ON ALERT TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY

OF THE NATION.

2. ON JULY 16, THE ARMED FORCES OF HONDURAS ISSUED COMMUNIQUE INDICATING THAT THERE HAD BEEN A OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING ON JULY 13 AT ZAZALAPA. THE COMMUNIQUE CONTINUES THAT AS A RESULT OF THAT INCIDENT THE CHIEFS OF STAFF OF BOTH COUNTRIES PLUS THE BORDER COMMANDERS MET AT NUEVA OCOTEPEQUE ON JULY 15. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO INVESTIGATE THE CAUSES OF THE FIGHTING AND TO SEEK SOLUTIONS TO BRING PEACE TO THE AREA. THE PARTIES AGREED TO AN IMMEDIATE CEASE FIRE, CONTROL OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, AND TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE BORDER COMMANDS TO AVOID FURTHER INCIDENTS. THE COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT THE OBJECT OF THE MEETING WAS TO CONSOLIDATE PEACE SO THAT THE PROGRESS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD NOT BE INTERRUPTED BY SIMILAR INCIDENTS. THE COMMUNIQUE CLOSED BY ASSURING THE HONDURAN PEOPLE OF THE ARMED FORCES' COMMITMENT TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE COUNTRY.

3. BEGIN COMMENT: DURING AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ' DEPARTURE CALL ON JULY 16, CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR REFERRED TO THE BORDER INCIDENTS ON JULY 13 AND 14. HE SAID THAT THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES WERE ALERT TO THE PROBLEM AND THAT THE CHIEFS OF STAFF OF BOTH COUNTRIES HAD MET ON JULY 15 TO REVIEW THE SITUATION. HE COMMENTED THAT THE CHIEFS OF STAFF WERE ATTEMPTING TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY THE POINTS CONTAINED IN THE JOINT DECLARATION ISSUED ON JUNE 12 AT EL AMATILLO AS A RESULT OF A MEETING BETWEEN MELGAR AND PRESIDENT MOLINA (SEE REFTEL). HE REMARKED THAT FONMIN PALMA HAD ALSO SPOKEN TO FONMIN BORGONOVO ABOUT THE INCIDENTS. MELGAR SAID HE FELT THAT THE CHIEFS OF STAFF WOULD BE ABLE TO CALM THE SITUATION. DEFMIN GENERAL CHINCHILLA AND PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER CESAR BATRES TOLD POLOFF ON JULY 16 THAT THEY BELIEVED THE SITUATION WAS UNDER CONTROL AND THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE STAFFS WOULD REDUCE TENSIONS ALONG THE FRONTIER. BATRES SPECULATED THAT THE BORDER CLASHES DURING THE RECENT PAST COULD BE A RESULT OF INTERNAL SALVADORAN CONFLICTS AFFECTING THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED FORCES. END COMMENT.
BARTCH

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